

Early man left his indelible mark upon the history of the region that was to become the Tulsa District.



Photo courtesy Gilcrease Museum

Such human life that survived into the 20th century in these parts found that the oil-rich Tulsa District region was also rich in geologists, who speak less poetically than Kerr. These earthly scientists have traced the Tulsa region back to a day when only primitive sea plants and bacteria existed on earth.⁴

Somewhere in the vicinity of 4.5 billion years ago the region was covered by inland seaways that in time exploded into mountains. The mountains in turn were slowly nibbled away by minute bites of wind and water, then overthrown by powerful forces that folded and buried the land into underground mountains, trapping rivers, streams, and seas within the earth.

Over another landscape of time, the returning seas deposited masses of sands, clays, and lime muds that were in turn shattered by the exploding Ozark Uplift some 340 million years ago.

The restless earth tilted upward along the northern and southern rims of what would become the Tulsa District. Far to the west, the Rocky Mountain uplift raised western plains skyward. To the east, low mountains were raised by the Ozark Uplift. To the south, the rim of this earthen bowl was tugged downward by the sagging Gulf of Mexico.

Again, erosion conquered all. The persistent nibbling of wind and rain eroded the basin almost flat, allowing the return of still another shallow sea. Here roamed, scientists have found, large, shore-dwelling dinosaurs and other reptiles.

Then came

THE WATER WORSHIPERS.

Streams and rivers cut across the face of the land during the past 100 million years or so, alternating periods of vigorous downcutting with quiet intervals when the stream valleys were covered by river muds and wind-blown dust.

"Primitive man," wrote Bob Kerr, "settled along the surface streams, and so great was his awe that he worshipped them."⁵

Archaeologists say prehistoric nomad tribes wandered into the area, for reasons still unknown, as early as 12,000 years ago.⁶ Thereafter, this region was home to numerous Indian tribes hunting the great buffalo herds across the plains. Traces of their civilization are found in the mounds they